

QURAN STUDY



MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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PREFACE

Bismillab hir rehman ir rahim is the first verse of the Quran. It is repeated no less than one hundred and fourteen times in the Quran. This repetition shows that, according to the Quran, this verse has great importance in the scheme of things given in the Quran.

The translation of this verse is: “In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.” The Prophet of Islam said that at the beginning of everything you do you should recite this verse. So, one can say that these are the words to begin any endeavour.

Beginning in this way is very important. It gives you great hope. After reciting this, you can believe that you are starting your work in a world that is controlled by God Almighty and that, if you follow the right path, you will have divine help bestowed upon you.

This belief, freeing you of tension and despair, gives you great psychological courage. It inculcates the spirit of positivity. The recitation of this verse is not simply lip-service: it shows your conviction about the creation plan of God.

Recitation of these words not only gives you courage but it also helps you to build a positive mode in your personality. This positivity makes you able to plan your life on a realistic basis. This removes all the negative thoughts from your mind. It enhances your creativity.

When you say, “I begin in the name of God Almighty,” you establish a relationship with the greatest power of the universe. You feel that you are not alone in this world. God Almighty is on your side. You feel that you are not an alien in this world, but an integral part of your surroundings.

Saying *bismillah hir rahman ir rahim* is not a ritual. It is a real part of belief. It is a conscious act. On the one hand, it is an acknowledgement of the Creator of the Universe and, on the other, it is a solemn expression of honesty and sincerity.

‘I begin in the name of God’ means I ask for the help of God Almighty in my work and in my life. Reciting these words amounts to refining your soul and re-engineering your mind on the lines of modesty. It is an acknowledgement from the creature to the Creator. Saying *Bismillah* is, thus, an acknowledgement of the higher authority—that without God’s blessings you can not achieve anything in this world.

In the chapter *Al-Qalam* (the Pen), the Quran narrates the story of certain horticulturalists who omitted to say *Bismillah*. This event is referred to in the Quran as follows:

We have tried them as we tried the owners of a certain orchard, who vowed to harvest all its fruits the next morning, without saying, ‘If it be God’s will.’ A calamity from your Lord befell the orchard as they slept. And by morning it lay as if it had already been harvested. (The Quran 68:17- 20)

This means that no one can achieve anything in this world without it being God’s will. God is the Lord of this universe. When one says, “*Bismillah...*” one invokes God to provide His help. This is like seeking the permission of God Almighty. So, saying *Bismillah* ensures the success of any task in this world.

I began Quran Study Classes on May 14 2016. On this day two years later, let us commence the Quran Study Program with these words: ‘*Bismillah hir rahman ir Rahim*’ (I begin) In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

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May 14 2018

QURAN STUDY PROGRAM

The **Quran Study Program** aims to help participants understand the wisdom of the Quran, derive principles from its verses to apply in life. It has the following resources:

QURAN STUDY MANUAL

The **Manual** helps participants to apply Quranic wisdom in daily life. Developed as self-study material, it aims at helping people discover and realize God, understand His Creation Plan and develop Muzakka (purified) personalities that live a peaceful life by applying Quranic wisdom. In becoming accountable to their Creator, people become duty-conscious to their fellowmen, thus, laying the foundation of a peaceful society in this world, in the hope of being found deserving of Paradise in the next world by Almighty God.

QURAN STUDY MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

The **Multimedia Resources** aim to reinforce the Quranic wisdom given in each step of the modules through videos, quotes, etc. Shared with participants and trainers through selected social media platforms, these are designed to supplement the manual.

USING THE QURAN STUDY MANUAL

The **Manual** is the main resource material of the program. Developed as self-study material, it aims to facilitate a three-fold process in participants. It first strives to help them develop the habit of contemplation, called *tadabbur*, *tafakkur*, *tawassum* and introspection (*muhāsibā*) in the Quran. Secondly, it strives to help participants derive wisdom from the Quranic verses and universalize them as principles. Thirdly, it strives to help them imbibe and apply the principles in daily life.

The **Manual** strives to help participants develop Quranic personalities. The manual further trains in positive, duty-conscious behaviour by explaining the importance of principles of life derived from the Quran. As reinforcement of the principles is important to training, you will find repetition at places. This has been kept on purpose. Once the principles have been imbibed, the *Application* section gives guidance to apply the principles in life. The *Quran Study Multimedia Resources* that include videos and social media posters, then, fortify the same, so following these principles becomes a habit for participants. Together the program has been packaged to help participants re-engineer their minds on positive lines by extracting wisdom from the Quran and applying it in life. This is the beginning of developing a Quranic, Muzakka personality.

STEP 1. THE QURAN: A BOOK OF CONTEMPLATION



Contemplation Points

- How does the Quran guide us?
 - How can we study the Quran?
 - What can we learn from the Quran?
-

The Quran is the Book of God, revealed to the Prophet of Islam in the first quarter of the seventh century. The Quran is not a mysterious blessing; it is a book of wisdom. In the chapter Sad (Sad), the Quran says of itself:

This is a blessed Book which We sent down to you [Muhammad], for people to ponder over its messages, and for those with understanding to take heed. (The Quran 38:29)

The Quran is, indeed, a book of wisdom, which gives us knowledge about the divine scheme along with all those principles that are required for successful living in this world. In short, the Quran is a book of guidance for mankind. It is, moreover, a simple book, which is easily understandable to anyone who has even the most rudimentary knowledge of Arabic. But all the things it has to offer can be discovered only through contemplation. It is contemplation, or *tadabbur*, that opens the doors of the Quranic treasure of knowledge. Then the Quran is marked by the most perfect clarity, but that does not mean that you can understand the Quran without pondering over it.

In fact there are two layers of Quranic learning: one, its literal meaning and the second is its deeper meaning. If you want to know the message of the Quran in a simple manner, then knowing its literal meaning will suffice. Its literal meaning will introduce you to the basic, practical advice offered by the Quran.

This kind of knowledge is quite enough for the common people who do not have a scholastic bent of mind. Then there is the deeper side of Quranic meaning. This can be comprehended only after an in-depth study of the scriptures through contemplation.

The Quran is evidently a book of guidance for both the common man as well as for highly educated people. And both are equally important, there is no doubt about it. Human societies consist of both the educated and the uneducated, so it is but natural that God Almighty should send a book that would be both accessible and meaningful to both the categories of people. Take the first verse of the Quran:

“All praise is due to God, the Lord of the Universe.” (The Quran 1:2)

This verse provides intellectual food for the common man as well as for those who have acquired great learning. Both can find spiritual nourishment in this Quranic verse.

The common man will take it in its simplest sense. He will take it in the sense that he himself and the world all around him were created by God Almighty alone. So, He alone is praiseworthy, He alone deserves his gratitude.

But those who have studied the scientific disciplines, and gained knowledge of biology, physiology, physics, chemistry, geology, astronomy etc., will take what the Quran has to say in a more profound sense. They will say that the whole world, including themselves, is a phenomenon of a highly complex creation. And, by taking into consideration all modern scientific discoveries, they will have the enthralling experience of understanding God's creation plan.

If the common man's response to this verse is his unquestioning acknowledgement of God, the educated man's response will be an

even more carefully reasoned and elevated acknowledgement of his Maker.

The Quran is a book of wisdom. We can learn both the literal meaning and the deeper meaning from the Quran by contemplating on its verses.

APPLICATION

Reflect: How can you understand the deeper meaning of the verses of the Quran?

Apply: Read the Quran while contemplating on its verses.

STEP 2. THE GIST OF THE QURAN



Contemplation Points

- What is the meaning of *hamd*?
 - What is the difference between the *hamd* of man and that of the rest of the universe?
 - What is the gist of the Quran?
-

The first verse of the Quran tells us what the gist of the Quran is. All other parts of the Quran are only details of this first verse, either directly or indirectly. It is the first verse of the chapter Al-Fatiha. The translation of this verse is like this:

All praise is due to God, the Lord of the Universe (The Quran 1:2)

Here the Quranic word used for praise is *hamd*. *Hamd* is a very comprehensive word in the Arabic language. It includes praise, gratefulness and acknowledgment with a sense of awe. According to the Quran, *hamd* is a universal culture. All the creatures of the universe, living and non-living both present *hamd* toward their Creator. Hamd is their daily worship. Thus the whole universe acknowledges the glory of God Almighty.

Man and other creatures acknowledge the glory of God, but there is a difference, the *hamd* of the other creatures is a programmed hamd: it is inculcated in them by the angels of God. This fact is given in the Quran:

Do you not see that all those who are in the heavens and on earth praise God, as do the birds with wings outstretched? Each knows his own mode of prayer and glorification: God has full knowledge of all that they do. (The Quran 24:41)

But man's case is quite different. Man was born with a mind that has a unique capacity, he was given full freedom. Man does everything by his own choice. So, man's hamd is hamd by choice. Man's hamd is not programmed hamd, but his hamd is a self-realized hamd, discovered by himself. This is the dignity of man.

The material world is controlled by the law of nature. Animals behave under their instinct; all the creatures other than man, behave like computers or robots. Their hamd is no doubt a pure hamd, but in computer terms it is a programmed hamd.

Man is the only creature in this vast universe who enjoys complete freedom. Man possesses the thinking capacity in the absolute sense of the word.

Man thinks, observes, contemplates, analyzes things and thus, he discovers the glory of God reflected in His creation. After acquiring this self-discovered knowledge, he exclaims:

‘O God, I witness Your existence, I acknowledge Your glory, I surrender before You. You are my Lord and I am your subject.’ This is the greatest *hamd* and this kind of hamd can be expressed only by human beings.

The chapter Al-Dhariyat (Scattering Winds) of the Quran tells us the purpose of creation in these words:

I created the jinn and mankind only so that they might worship Me: I seek no sustenance from them, nor do I want them to feed Me—it is God who is the great Sustainer, the Mighty One, the Invincible. (The Quran 51: 56-58)

According to the commentators of the Quran, here worship (*ibadat*) means *marifah*. What is *marifah*? *Marifah* means realization of God through contemplation. When one realizes God, he falls into a great sense of awe and *hamd* is only an expression of this kind of deep feeling towards the Lord of the Universe.

The hamd of man is unique as man acknowledges his Lord by his own choice, not by any compulsion.

APPLICATION

Think: What is *ibadat* without *marifah*?

Apply: Try to realize God by contemplating on His creation and His blessings.

STEP 3. FAITH IN GOD IS A DISCOVERY



Contemplation Points

- What is God-realization? How can you realize God?
 - What is faith?
 - Can faith help you to develop spirituality?
-

In the chapter *Al-Ma'idah* (The Table) of the Quran, the story is told of a group who came to the Prophet and accepted him as a prophet:

When they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears, because of the Truth

they realized. They say, 'Our Lord, we believe, so count us among those who bear witness.' (The Quran 5:83)

According to this verse, these people accepted the Prophet's faith. But their acceptance was not of a simple kind: it was the outcome of *marifah*, that is, realization of the truth.

What is realization or discovery? It is the result of deep contemplation. When anyone ponders over nature and thinks about himself, he discovers that there is a great mind behind this creation. His study, his observation and contemplation, all lead him to believe that there is this great reality. After this realization, he feels that he has no option but to proclaim the existence of God. The next step is to aver there is no God but the one God.

This declaration inevitably follows surrender before God. One who makes such a declaration not only accepts the truth but he becomes a worshipper of God and a follower of God's guidance. His thinking, his speech, his behaviour are all coloured in the dye of God. He adopts a God-oriented life. This faith, or iman, revolutionizes one's thinking. It brings about a sea-change in one's life.

Faith, or *iman*, is like a seed. A seed is a growing thing. It grows and grows till it becomes a big tree with roots, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. All these are potential parts of the seed. A tree is an actualization of a seed's potential. The same is true of faith, or *iman*. Faith is like a spiritual seed. When the seed is implanted in a personality, it starts growing.

There is everything in this spiritual seed, but everything is in the form of potential. When it finds its place in one's mind, it starts growing and all those things that are part of the divine religion, begin to unfold. This process continues till the individual becomes a divine person in the fullest sense of the word.

Although faith, or *iman*, is full of potential, it does not grow automatically like the seed of a tree. It requires great endeavour and anyone who wants his personality to grow, must start an ideological struggle. Without this, no one can grow into a full-fledged tree of the divine religion.

An ideological struggle means contemplation, introspection, observation and developing the ability to draw lessons from different kinds of experiences, accompanied, of course by a study of divine literature. All these processes are paths to spiritual development and when one follows this course, he surely will reach his destination. The growth of a tree is controlled by the external laws of physics, but the growth of a divine personality is a self-controlled phenomenon.

Faith is like a seed. Just as a seed grows and grows till it becomes a big tree; similarly faith is the seed that develops a divine personality.

APPLICATION

Reflect: Think how faith is a seed that helps you to develop spiritually.

Apply: Ponder over God's creation. Looking at the perfection in creation, think of the Creator. In this way, discover God.

STEP 4. THE VOICE OF NATURE



Contemplation Points

- When calamity or misfortune occurs, how do you deal with it?
 - What do you feel when you are living in comfort?
 - Who do you remember when you feel helpless?
-

The Quran states that belief in God does not emanate from external sources. It is integral to human nature. But this nature is double-

sided, a trait which becomes apparent when disaster strikes. The chapter *Yunus* (Jonah) of the Quran refers to this reality:

Whenever any trouble befalls a person, he prays to Us all the time, lying on his side, sitting or standing; but when We remove his trouble, he goes on his way as if he had never prayed to Us for the removal of his trouble. Thus it is that the doings of the transgressors are made to look fair to them. (The Quran 10:12)

This means that when all is well, a person may deny God's existence, but when there is a calamity and he is unable to deal with it, he feels that he is helpless, his inner nature, consciously or unconsciously, calls out at that point to God. In times of crisis, he admits that there is a superior power and that, without the help of this power, he cannot hold his own on this earth.

A notable example of this is Ali ibn Abi Talib, a companion of the Prophet, who admitted that he had discovered God in a moment of helplessness. This is a common experience. There are ups and downs in everyone's life. Everyone suffers some kind of unwanted situation; but such moments are moments of discovery. Helplessness is the surest way to find God.

This is true not only of those who deny the existence of God; even believers may have this kind of experience. It is but natural that a believer may at times feel that his conviction in God has weakened or has even been forgotten. But then he receives some kind of shock in his life, physically or mentally. This serves as a reminder of God, after which he re-discovers his Lord. His faith is restored.

God created man with great intellect; man is able, therefore, to discover God through ratiocination or reasoning, through the study of books or through the observation of nature. Man is fully competent to discover God by using his capacity to think.

It is also a fact that when a person finds himself in conditions of comfort and luxury, and when he enjoys every convenience, he forgets his Lord. Consciously or unconsciously, he develops the belief that he is the master of his own destiny; that he can make what he wills of his life on his own, through his own efforts. It seems then that he has set aside his belief in God.

Then comes some kind of misfortune or calamity and it is this sad experience that makes him realize that he is helpless, that he is not the master of his own destiny; there are powers other than himself that have the upper hand. But this crisis comes as a blessing in disguise, for it causes him to rediscover his Lord. Through this crisis his faith is firmly re-established. It is the sad testimony of history that, in times of crisis, man remembers his Lord. But when the crisis is over and order has been restored, he forgets everything and refuses to learn a lesson from it.

When a person finds himself in conditions of comfort and luxury, he forgets his Lord, thinking he is the master of his own destiny. Then when misfortune comes, he realizes that he is not the master of his own destiny. The crisis comes as a blessing in disguise as he rediscovers his Lord.

APPLICATION

Reflect: Are you in control of your own destiny?

Apply: Do not feel hopeless when calamity occurs. Remember that your helplessness can help you to find God.

STEP 5. THE MESSAGE OF THE QURAN— THE CREATION PLAN OF GOD



Contemplation Points

- What is the reason for the creation of man?
 - Why has man been given freedom?
 - What is Paradise? How can man be found to be deserving of Paradise?
-

Every man and woman asks the same questions: Who am I? Why am I here on this planet earth? What is the purpose of my life? What is success and what is failure? These questions may be summed up in a single sentence: What is the creation plan of the Creator? Chapter sixty-seven of the Quran, *Al-Mulk* (The Kingdom), gives the answer to this question. The translation of the relevant verse is as follows:

God created death and life so that He might test you, and find out which of you is best in conduct. He is the Mighty, the Most Forgiving One. (The Quran 67:2)

According to the Quran, man was created as an eternal being. In the above Quranic verse ‘death and life’ represent both the pre-death period of life and the post-death period of human life. So, death and life cover the entire eternal life span of human beings.

The fact is that God created man with a well thought-out plan, the essence of which is to give man complete freedom—not simply as a gift, but as a test. The result of this test would enable God to know who misused his freedom and who put his freedom to the best use. This was, and still is, the divine scheme of things for man, the creation plan of God.

This test is not just for the sake of testing mankind. It is for a high purpose. Before creating man, God created an ideal world, that is, Paradise. Now God wanted ideal men and women who would merit being settled in this Paradise for all eternity. Therefore, the present world is a selection ground for Paradise.

According to this divine scheme, the present human lifetime affords a great opportunity to man. In the pre-death period of life, man has the chance to qualify himself for Paradise, so that in the post-death period of life, he may be settled as a deserving candidate in this perfect world.

This divine scheme gives man great hope. The present world may be one of problems, for in this world there are sorrows, pains and unwanted situations. But the divine scheme of life prescribed in the Quran gives us a great solace. It is like a bright light in the darkness. It gives men and women great hope that all those sorrows they experience in the present world are for the temporary period of testing, and that once they qualify in the test, they will be fortunate candidates for eternal Paradise.

This Quranic notion explains human life. It explains not only the existence of man, but also all the misadventures that he faces in this world. It gives great meaning to all the good and the bad in life.

Man is born with unique qualities, he is born with unlimited desires, his mind has enormous capacity but, before realizing his potential and before fulfilling his desires, his life comes to an end.

Given his often untimely demise, man seems to be a completely inexplicable phenomenon. But in the light of the above divine scheme, human life becomes completely explainable and understandable. Keeping this in mind, one sees how everything falls into place.

According to the creation plan of God, the present human lifetime affords a great opportunity to man. It gives man an opportunity in the pre-death period, the chance to qualify himself for Paradise, so that in the post-death period of life he may be settled as a deserving candidate in this perfect world.

APPLICATION

Reflect: Why have we been sent to this world?

Apply: Do you consider your freedom as a gift or a test and why?

STEP 6. JOURNEY TOWARDS PARADISE



Contemplation Points

- Who sustains the universe?
- How can we find comfort in our hearts?

The well-known American evangelist Billy Graham (b. 1918) narrates one of his life's experiences. Once he received an urgent message from an American statesman who wanted to meet him at the earliest. On receiving this message, Billy Graham cancelled all his appointments and immediately set out to meet this man. When he arrived at the statesman's palatial home, he was immediately taken to a room, where Billy Graham and the statesman sat on chairs facing one another. Then, in a serious tone, the statesman said to Billy Graham: "You see, I am an old man. Life has lost all meaning. I am ready to take a fateful leap into the unknown. Young man, can you give me a ray of hope?" (*The Secret of Happiness*, Billy Graham, 1955, p. 2)

This is a common question. Every man and woman, consciously or unconsciously, have this question in their minds. This is the first concern of every human being. To find out the real answer we have to try to understand the creation plan of God. God is the Creator of this world. And, only by gaining an understanding of the Creator's plan, can we get the right answer to this question.

The Quran, the preserved book of God, gives an answer to this question. According to the Quran, man is born as an eternal being, but his lifespan is divided into two parts: pre-death period and post-death period. The pre-death period is very short, and the post-death period is eternal.

Everyone feels that they have enormous desires, but that they are not being able to fulfil these desires. The reason is that the present world is a limited world with many kinds of disadvantages.

This means that there is a contradiction between man's nature which seeks fulfilment of his desires, and the world which is incapable of fulfilling man's desires. Man, by nature, wants a world where his personality can find total fulfilment, but the present world fails to provide such fulfilment. Sir James Jeans in his book, *The Mysterious Universe*, has rightly pointed out this fact in these words: It appears that man has strayed into a world that was not made for him.

According to the Quran, the present earth is not a habitat for man. Man's habitat lies in the world hereafter. According to the divine plan, man must develop his personality in the pre-death period, so that he is selected as a deserving candidate for this habitat, or Paradise, in the post-death period.

The Quran tells us that the above habitat or Paradise is perfectly equipped to fulfil all the desires of man in the utmost sense of the word.

Man is born with total freedom. The only requirement for finding entry into Paradise is that he should use his freedom properly and avoid all kinds of misuse of freedom. It is the divine criterion that will decide whose case was one of proper use of freedom and whose was that of misuse of freedom.

Here, the chapter *Al-Tin* (The Fig) of the Quran is worth quoting.

We have indeed created man in the best of mould, then We cast him down as the lowest of the low, except for those who believe and do good deeds—theirs shall be an unending reward! What then after this, can make you deny the Last Judgement? Is not God the greatest of the judges? (The Quran 95:4-8)

It means that while man is born as a complete personality, his present abode – the planet earth – is incomplete. Because of this disparity, man's condition on earth becomes like that of a fish out of water. The present world has a highly intelligent design. But the disparity between man's nature and the limitations of the present-world to

fulfil all his desires indicate the need for man to have a real habitat. This habitat is Paradise. Only those men and women will find entry into Paradise who qualify themselves as deserving candidates for it. The planet earth is a selection ground for this purpose.

The Quran mentions all aspects of Paradise in detail and then guides man in these words:

For the like of this, then, let the workers work. (The Quran 37:61)

To be found deserving of inhabiting the eternal world of Paradise is true success. One who wants Paradise in the post-death period should use his freedom properly and not misuse it in the pre-death period.

APPLICATION

Think: Do you think the present world is our habitat, a place where our desires are fulfilled?

Apply: How do you think you should strive to gain entry into Paradise?

STEP 7. DEVELOPING A PURIFIED, POSITIVE PERSONALITY



Contemplation Points

- What is meant by *tazkiyah*?
 - How can we purify ourselves?
 - How can we be found deserving of entering Paradise?
-

In the Quran, *tazkiyah* is given as one of the four responsibilities for which Almighty God sent the prophets. (The Quran 2:129) *Tazkiyah*, literally means purification. It covers a number of Islamic imperatives: purifying oneself of the temptations of the self and Satan; refraining from negative reaction when faced with unpleasant

experiences occasioned by others; and remaining resistant to such influences as cause man to deviate from the straight path, etc.

Islam not only gives tazkiyah as a method of transformation but gives a positive motivation for those who are able to purify themselves, as mentioned in the Quran:

“Gardens of eternity, through which rivers flow—that is the recompense for those who purify themselves.” (The Quran 20:76)

According to the above verse, Paradise, the ideal abode of the hereafter, is for one who purifies his soul in this present world and reaches the world hereafter with a purified, positive personality.

If eternal paradise is the reward for purification (or positive transformation), this will be a positive motivation for individuals to transform themselves to develop positive personalities. The Quran not only gives moral values, but these can also be universalized to extract universal principles of life to develop positive personalities.

According to the Quran, for individuals who have been able to transform their personalities on positive lines, based on the universal principles given in it, God Almighty has prepared the eternal positive, peaceful world of paradise. It is for such people that our most compassionate Lord will say:

‘O soul at peace, return to your Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing. Join My servants. Enter My Paradise.’ (The Quran 89: 27-29)

It is such a transformed soul, referred to as an-nafsun-mutmainna in the Quran, who lives in this temporary world peacefully, that God will give the eternal home of peace (The Quran 10: 25) in the next eternal world.

Paradise, the ideal abode of the hereafter, is for one who purifies

his soul in this present world and reaches the world hereafter with a purified, positive personality.

APPLICATION

Reflect: How can you purify yourself?

Apply: Study the Quran to find universal principles of life and try to apply them in your personal life.

STEP 8. PEACE OF MIND



Contemplation Points

- How can one achieve peace of mind?
 - What is meant by remembrance of God?
 - How can you become a super-achiever?
-

Everyone has a mind but peace of mind is a rare phenomenon. Everyone wants to live in peace but peace eludes almost everyone. Perhaps it is the greatest problem of the human world. What is the solution to this problem? The Quran gives a solution to this problem in unequivocal terms. It is recorded in the chapter *Al-Ra'id* (Thunder):

Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of God—surely in the remembrance of God hearts can find comfort. (The Quran 13:28)

Here 'remembrance of God' does not mean that simply reciting the word 'God' (Allah) can give you peace of mind. It means that, in reality, contentment is only for those who accept the creation plan of God. More particularly, this means that this world having been created by God and God having laid down all the laws of nature, anyone who wants to live with a peaceful mind in this world must know the creation plan of God and try to live in accordance with it.

According to this divine plan, man has been created as an ideal-seeking animal. Everyone is, therefore, an idealist by birth. But the present world is not an ideal world. Man's mind may in its capacity be unlimited, but our world is one of limitations. It is this contradiction between the two that creates problems. Tension of mind is a result of the gap between seeking and achievement.

No one can alter the course of divine creation. In this situation you have only one option and that is to adjust yourself to the external world, rather than try to mould the world according to your own desires.

Fulfilment of all desires cannot be a goal for a person in this world. You should learn the art of desire management rather than try to fulfil all your desires. But here is good news for every man and woman: although the material world is limited, the world of thought is unlimited. We must set our goals in life in terms of intellectual achievement and not in terms of material achievement. The intellectual world is so vast that there is no end to intellectual activity. The intellectual journey can go beyond space and time, while material activities cannot.

The present situation is a blessing from God. It is God's will that man should adopt the principle of contentment as regards material things. But as far as intellectual achievement is concerned, there is no limit at all. God Almighty wants to see every man and woman as a super achiever—but in terms of intellectual goals and not in terms of material goals.

If you travel westward across the Atlantic and start your journey from the African coast, the American coast will be the limit. But if you try to discover the laws of the universe, then there is no limit. The world of facts has no limits, so you can continue your journey in it forever.

If you want to have a peaceful mind, adopt the formula—simple living, high thinking.

To have peace of mind one should adopt the principle of contentment as regards material things. But one should try to be a super achiever as regards one's intellectual goals.

APPLICATION

Reflect: On the principle of: Simple Living and High Thinking in keeping peace of mind.

Apply: Try to be materially content and increase your scope of intellectual achievement.

STEP 9. A DUTY-CONSCIOUS SOCIETY



Contemplation Points

- What is the importance of a duty-conscious society over a rights-conscious one?
 - Can you force others to give you your rights?
 - What is the importance of fulfilling duties?
-

One unique aspect of the Quran is that it always lays stress on duties rather than on rights. There are many verses which tell us to do this or do that. But you will not find a single verse in the Quran that encourages human beings to make demands. No verse suggests that people should be able to expect that they can make claims on society. The whole of the Quran is based on this norm. One such Quranic verse says:

God commands justice, kindness and giving their [due to] near relatives, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and transgression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed! (The Quran 16:90)

Any ideology based on individual entitlement is unnatural, while any ideology based on duty is natural. Those who are conscious of their own rights will always make demands upon others. Their formula is: Others have to give to us. While the duty conscious person will always think in terms of self-construction. He will always try to fulfil his own duty.

The formula of a rights-conscious person is: They must do it. While the formula of a duty-conscious person is: I will do it. A rights-based ideology is focused upon what has to come from others, whereas a duty-based ideology starts with the self. The rights-based ideology is based on the 'we and they' concept, while the duty-based ideology is based on the 'we and we' concept.

A rights-based ideology is negative, while a duty-based ideology is positive. A rights-based ideology leads to social anarchy, for it is bound to create different rival classes, while a duty-based ideology leads to harmony, solidarity, peace and compassion.

This same principle is laid down in a saying of the Prophet:

“Give to others what others want from you and ask for your rights from God.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, 7052)

This means that you should fulfil your duty towards others and achieve what you want to achieve by your own efforts. This is the only feasible formula in this world. According to the creation plan of God, this world is based on challenge and competition. No one is going to give you what you want: you have to work hard for everything on your own. That is the law of nature. And there can be no change in the laws laid down by the Creator.

First of all, you have to understand the creation plan of God, and then you have to adjust to it. You have no option but to make adjustments in this world. You cannot mould the world; you can only achieve your goals through adjustment.

A person who is obsessed with what is due to him from others, will fail to plan his life on a realistic basis. He is doomed to live a life of failure and tension. A duty conscious person, on the other hand, will fulfil his duties towards others. And according to the law of nature, he will certainly be requited by others. It is this fact that reflects in the saying: ‘It is in giving that we receive.’

This world is based on the principle of give and take, so you have to give something to others before you can expect anything from them, and if you ask others to fulfil your needs, no one will pay heed to your demands.

Any ideology based on individual entitlement is unnatural, while any ideology based on duty is natural. A rights-based ideology leads to social anarchy, for it is bound to create different rival classes, while a duty-based ideology leads to harmony, solidarity, peace and compassion.

APPLICATION

Think: What is meant by: ‘in giving we receive’?

Apply: Work hard for what you want. Do not expect others to give you things on a platter.

STEP 10. UPHOLDING JUSTICE FOR THE SAKE OF GOD



Contemplation Points

- What is meant by upholding justice?
 - What is the difference between the confrontational and non-confrontational approach?
 - What is meant by acceptance of the status quo?
-

The ideal social system, as set forth in the Quran, is based on justice. Indeed, justice is the central idea of all the social teachings of Islam.

In the chapter *Al-Nisa'* (Women) of the Quran, there is a particularly apt and detailed verse on this subject. Its translation is as follows:

Believers, be strict in upholding justice and bear witness for the sake of God, even though it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kindred. Be they rich or poor, God knows better about them both. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice. If you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that God is well aware of all that you do. (The Quran 4:135)

According to the Quran, a good society can be established only on the principles of justice. Justice has an absolute value and a person should uphold justice, even if the outcome goes against him or his relatives and friends. No excuse whatsoever is acceptable in this regard.

The above Quranic verse does not say: “O believers, establish the system of justice on earth.” It simply urges believers to follow the principles of justice in their own lives. In other words, this verse is to be taken in the intransitive rather than the transitive sense.

If you give people the target of either establishing justice on earth or implementing the laws of justice in society, it will lead to confrontational situations. This kind of target divides people into two categories: those who want to establish justice and those who are the subjects of justice.

This kind of target is bound to create conflict between two groups, ultimately leading to war between them. The Quran does not ask its followers to pursue such ends.

According to the Quran, believers must follow the principle of justice in their personal lives, that is, they must think with justice, speak with justice, behave with justice and in all their dealings they must follow justice. What it really advocates is self-discipline. No hate or strife is involved in this notion.

Then, the above Quranic verse says that a believer must uphold justice, even if it runs counter to his own interests. This means that Quranic justice is absolute justice. Believers are not allowed to compromise on anything relative to justice. They are not allowed to succumb to anyone who may hold different views in this regard.

Justice is absolute and in every situation: it must be followed by all believers. Justice literally means fair treatment of people and is the appropriate way of dealing with all members of society. This kind of behaviour is just behaviour and it is such behaviour that makes a person a true human being. Without this kind of behaviour, a person cannot come up to the human standard.

According to the Quran, this kind of just behaviour guarantees a double success: success in this world and also success in the world hereafter. Justice being the absolute good, injustice of any kind is inexcusable. Justice is the key to Paradise as well as to all kinds of success.

One must follow the principle of justice in their personal lives: think, speak, behave with justice in all their dealings with others. This results in peace. If one tries to establish justice on earth or implement the laws of justice in society, it will lead to confrontational situations.

APPLICATION

Reflect: What is meant by adhering to justice?

Apply: Try to follow justice in your personal life. How does this help you and society?

STEP 11. A SENSE OF ACCOUNTABILITY



Contemplation Points

- Do you think you are accountable to a Higher Being?
- How does being accountable make you behave?
- Does living in fear of something have a positive or a negative effect?

One of the important teachings of Islam is the concept of accountability. According to the Quran, life is a very serious business, for which reason everyone ought to be imbued with a total sense of accountability. In the chapter Al-Isra' (The Night Journey) of the Quran, this concept is explained here in detail:

Give full measure, when you measure, and weigh with accurate scales. That is fair, and better in the end. Do not follow what you do not know; for the ear and the eye and the heart shall all be called to account. (The Quran 17:35-36)

Everything we say is inevitably based on information that we gather from outside. Basically, there are three sources: what we hear, what we see and what we think. These three senses give us what may be called data, but in each case there is the possibility of misunderstanding or miscalculation, so we have to be very careful to be precise in all of our utterances.

The expressions in the above verse concerning weights and measures are used symbolically. Here, measuring or weighing means intellectual measuring or intellectual weighing. We should be very accurate when we speak about anyone or about any issue. Our behaviour must be as precise as a scientific scale.

Right thinking and precise speaking are moral requirements: neglect of these matters can have very serious consequences. Since everything is known to God Almighty, everyone will be punished or rewarded according to how he speaks and behaves. This being so, every man or woman must of necessity be very serious. In the firm

belief that one day he will be presented before the all-knowing God, everyone must conduct himself with a deep sense of responsibility.

Everyone will face an unavoidable judgement issued by God Almighty. This Quranic teaching is very important, for it provides a great incentive to the building of a person as a righteous and healthy member of society.

Experience shows that sermons alone cannot suffice. No sermon, however powerful, can change people; every good sermon needs one more thing: fear of punishment. It is only fear of punishment which guarantees that people will develop the right kind of character.

If you deliver sermons, people will find some excuse not to follow their teachings. It is only the fear of punishment that will make the content of those sermons of immediate personal interest. Such fear inculcates the right spirit. Even if you have a good excuse for wrong behaviour, don't use it. Because if you use it, you shall have to pay a heavy price and the law is the law: it brooks no excuses.

Living in fear of punishment is not a negative feeling. It is a completely positive feeling. It turns you into a responsible person; it inculcates the spirit of self-discipline. It makes you an honest person, building into your personality a welcome predictability. And it saves you from all kinds of deviation. A sense of accountability makes you manage your affairs in the best possible way. It compels you to make the best use of your time, energy and resources.

Everyone will face an unavoidable judgement issued by God Almighty. This Quranic teaching is very important, for it provides a great incentive to the building of a person as a righteous and healthy member of society.

APPLICATION

Reflect: What is the importance of accountability in righteous behaviour?

Apply: Try to develop right thinking, precise speaking and righteous behaviour. Can you develop it without accountability?

STEP 12. QURAN—UNIVERSAL MESSAGE FOR ALL MANKIND



Contemplation Points

- Who has the Quran been sent to—Muslims or all mankind?
 - What is the basic message of the Quran?
 - Is the message of the Quran universal?
-

We come to know from different statements of the Quran that this book has been sent for all nations of the world. A similar statement has been made regarding the Prophet in a number of places in the Quran. The following verse is one such example:

“We have sent you as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner for the whole of mankind, but most people have no knowledge.”
(The Quran 34:28)

The Quran is written in Arabic, the language in which it was revealed in Arabia. But as far as its message is concerned, it is in its nature, entirely global and universal. It addresses all the nations of the world rather than any one particular nation.

The basic message of the Quran is that God is One. And it is clear that this is not any temporary or local matter. This is such a fact as concerns all human beings. It has been made clear in the Quran that a man does not die and end forever but that after his death he will be brought to life again and made to stand before God for the final reckoning. This is also such a reality as concerns the whole of humanity.

Similarly, it has been enjoined in the Quran that we should adopt the path of justice in our dealings with others. (The Quran 4:135). This is also such a teaching as relates to all human beings. It has been declared in the Quran that all human beings are the children of one

and the same parents, i.e., Adam and Eve, and so all human beings are brothers and sisters to each other. If there is any difference, it is not on the basis of race but on degrees of piety. This is also such a teaching as relates to all human beings. All the teachings of the Quran enjoy the position of universality. They provide guidance for all human beings from here to eternity.

The teachings of the Quran are for all mankind. Its basic message is that God is one. After man dies, he will be brought to life again and made to stand before God Almighty for the final reckoning.

APPLICATION

Reflect: Can there be more than one God of the universe when everything functions so perfectly?

Think: What will be our predicament when we stand before God after our death?

Suggestions for Further Reading

For further understanding of the subject we suggest you read the following books of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan:

1. The Quran (Translation) (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2014).
2. The Quran for All Humanity (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2003).
3. The Quran—An Abiding Wonder (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2008).
4. The Treasury of the Quran (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2005).
5. Quran Study Manual (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2015).

We further suggest you visit www.cpsglobal.org to find the above books and other articles and materials on the subject.

WE INVITE YOU TO STUDY THE QURAN



“Read! In the name of your Lord, who created: created man from a clot [of blood]. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.”
[The Quran 96:1-5]

The Quran appears to be a book just like any other book. But the Quran is a book with a difference. Scholars maintain that it requires almost eighty disciplines to understand the Quran, but more important than all these disciplines is sincerity. Without great sincerity, no one can understand the Quran, no one can penetrate its wisdom. No one can understand its deeper meaning.

What is sincerity? Sincerity is another name for objectivity, without which one cannot comprehend the deeper meaning of the Quran. Most people are obsessed with different kinds of prejudices. And prejudices are the greatest hindrances to understanding the Quran. It is only if you rid your mind of them that you will be able to understand its meaning.

The Quran, relatively speaking, is a modest book and its language is also very simple. To appreciate the Quran, you don't need to understand it from A to Z. Although there is a comprehensive theme that covers all the chapters of the Quran, at the same time every single verse of the Quran has an independent meaning. One can learn some very important lessons from pondering over just a single verse. One scholar has rightly said:

“One verse a day keeps the devil away.”

The verses of the Quran total approximately six thousand three hundred. These are arranged in the form of one hundred and

fourteen chapters, some long, some very short. Every chapter, except one, begins with the words: “In the name of God, Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.” All the statements of the Quran relate to God Almighty, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. In the Quran, God Almighty directly addresses man saying: ‘O man! This is your God addressing you. Listen to Me and follow it. This is the path of success for you.’

Some of the teachings of the Quran are eternal, such as *zikr*, that is, remembrance of God. Then there are a number of provisional teachings like *jihad*. It is very important to differentiate between the two kinds of verses. Without keeping this principle in mind, you are likely to misinterpret the scriptures. There are occasions when the Quran refers to particular events that occurred during the Prophet’s lifetime, but it should be borne in mind that the themes are universal. Here, in giving a particular reference, it is the intention of the Quran to give a common message. This principle is also very important, for without keeping it in mind, no one can properly interpret the real meaning of the Quran.

In one sense, the Quran is a very comprehensive book, as it has many references from history, astronomy, physical events and natural phenomena. But the majority of these references are expressed not in detail, but in the form of allusions or hints. The reader must supply the details from his own knowledge and experience. Having done so, he can understand the comprehensive meaning of the Quran.

The Quran also records the history of the prophets. It refers to more than two dozen prophets of different times and different races. Every prophet was sent into different situations, and each one bore some specific message. In this sense, all the prophets are equal; every prophet is a source of guidance. One who wants to understand

the prophetic mission, must study all the prophets and not just any one of them at random.

‘Quran’ is an Arabic word. Its literal meaning is ‘to be read’. This means that the Quran is a book of study. Indeed, the Quran suggests that every man and woman should read and study and explore the truth. Since study, to be successful, must be imbued with the spirit of inquiry, the message of the Quran is: Be a seeker, study, and contemplate. Analyze knowledge in an unbiased manner. And then you will reach the truth.

According to the Quran, this is the sirat-e-mustaqeem (straight path) (1:6). One should follow this straight path and then one will certainly reach the final destination, that is, success in both the periods of life—in the pre-death period and in the post-death period.

We invite you to read the Quran alongwith its meaning to derive wisdom through it and apply its principles in daily life to develop a Quranic personality.

ABOUT MIND RE-ENGINEERING PROGRAMS

In globalized pluralistic societies conflicts are natural. Problems occur when conflicts turn to violence as is being seen in the 21st century. To lay the foundation of peace, **CPS Study Forum** facilitates *informal study* of the books of **Quran Foundation** and *formal study* through six **Mind Re-Engineering Programs**: 1. *Culture of Peace*, 2. *Countering Violent Extremism*, 3. *Islam As It Is*, 4. *Nation-First*, 5. *Interfaith Dialogue for Peace-Making* and 6. *Conflict Resolution and Peace Building*.

1. Culture of Peace (CoP) Program strives to transform mindsets towards peaceful living:

- By realizing the importance of God-given freedom.
 - By appreciating that rights-first leads to confrontation; duties-first to peace.
- ... Graduates of the program, in developing positive personalities, become contributors of a culture of peace in society, nations and internationally.

2. Countering Violent Extremism Program trains stake-holders to counter violent extremism by realizing:

- Its root cause is the political interpretation of Islam which has no basis in Islam.
- The path to Paradise is *tazkiyah* (purification); not *jihad*.

... Graduates of the program, in understanding that it is a case of ideology of violence vs counter-ideology of peace, will be able to counter extremism effectively.

3. Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building Program trains in conflict prevention and peace-building by:

- Explaining conflicts are natural and can be avoided, prevented and managed.
- Teaching C-R and P-B modes: avoidance, harmony, non-interference, reconciliation and more.

... Graduates of the program can manage conflicts effectively to become peace-builders.

4. Islam As It Is Program helps participants comprehend the religion of Islam as it is, based on the Scriptures—The Quran and Sunnah. Then, they will be able to:

- Discover the religion of Islam as it is from its original sources.
- Relate that Islam is a religion of following of one's own free will and not of enforcement.

... Graduates of the program, having understood Islam from its original sources, will be able to differentiate between Islam and the actions of Muslims. They will judge the actions of the Muslims in the light of Islamic teachings and not vice versa.

5. Nation-First Program trains citizens in patriotism and nation-building by:

- Becoming duty-conscious and put the needs of the nation first.
- Developing national character, excellence and leadership skills in themselves.

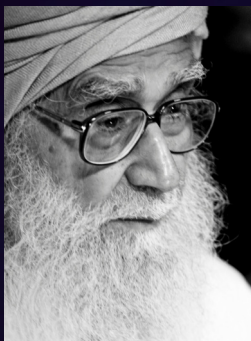
... Graduates of the program, in imbibing national character, can develop patriotism, leadership skills and duty-first activism.

6. Interfaith Dialogue for Peace-Making Program trains participants in dialogue for peace-making by explaining:

- Differences are a natural part of life including in religion.
- Dialogue is for mutual learning and not debate or to establish one's superiority.
- Principles of dialogue: Mutual respect, tolerance, reconciliation, adjustment, agree to disagree, etc.

... Graduates of the program, in learning dialogue for mutual learning will be able to undertake interfaith dialogue peacefully.

CPS Study Forum strives to re-engineer the minds of participants towards a culture of peace, make them understand Islam as it is depicted in its original sources, counter violent extremism, help them resolve conflicts, undertake interfaith dialogue and work towards nation-building. To take part in the informal and formal education programs, contact us at info@cpsglobal.org.



The Quran is a divine book that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the first quarter of the seventh century. The message of the Quran centres on the Creation Plan of God, which informs a person about the purpose of his life and what he is going to confront after death. The Quran guides an individual on his entire journey through this life into the life Hereafter.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is a well-known Islamic scholar who has presented Islam in the contemporary idiom. His translation of the Quran is available in more than 23 languages. The commentary on the Quran, penned by the Maulana, provides deeper insights into what the Quran seeks from its readers and enlightens the Quranic path for attainment of spirituality and wisdom. Maulana's writings and lectures help in further understanding the relevance of the Quran to the present-day individual.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan set up Quran Foundation under the aegis of CPS International on 2 April 2015 to take the peaceful message of the Quran into every home for interfaith harmony and understanding. The Foundation disseminates the teachings of the Quran by distributing free copies of the Quran, undertaking discourses, interactions, educational courses, social media and so on. The present manual is part of the **Quran Study Program**. To find out more about the Foundation and its programs contact us at: info@cpsglobal.org.

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